



Dry Tortugas National Park

The official newspaper of
Dry Tortugas National Park
Volume 2, Number 1



Remote Location is Important Landmark

FOR THOSE SEEKING ADVENTURE, DRY TORTUGAS National Park has much to offer. The Tortugas lie at the farthest end (or the beginning depending on your perspective) of the Florida Keys, closer to Cuba than the American mainland. To reach this remote marine wilderness one must travel by boat or plane over 68 miles of open ocean. Visiting such an isolated place means that you need to be prepared, not only for rough seas, but for primitive conditions. All power is generated on site, cisterns collect rainwater, and waste must be hauled away by boat. There are no public phones, restrooms or snack bars. Even cell phones are useless here. Make sure to bring anything that you may need, such as protective clothing, sunscreen, or medication (especially for motion sickness). You will not be able to purchase these items in the park.

Gateway to the Gulf

Though remote, the Dry Tortugas have been an important landmark for passing ships since their discovery by Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de León in 1513. He named the islands *Las Tortugas* (the turtles) because of the area's abundance of large sea turtles. The word "dry" was added later to warn mariners of the lack of fresh



water on these small coral islands. Beginning in 1825, a lighthouse was established on Garden Key to warn ships of treacherous reefs. Even today the area remains a busy crossroads or gateway for ships entering and leaving the Gulf of Mexico. Shipwrecks, too, are commonplace—and a tragic reminder of the risks associated with navigating the Straits of Florida. Today the park possesses one of the richest concentrations of shipwrecks in North America, with some dating to the early 1600s. Ironically, the same reefs that threatened the safety of passing ships helped to form one of the most strategic harbors in U.S. history. Construction of Fort Jefferson was begun in 1846 to help fortify this natural anchorage.

A Place Like No Other

Dry Tortugas National Park, home to history and natural wonders above and below the waters' surface, has long been an inspiration to visitors. The park's coral and sea grass communities are among the most vibrant in the Florida Keys. The sooty tern finds its only regular U.S. nesting site on Bush Key, adjacent to Fort Jefferson. Large sea turtles lumber onto the park's protected beaches each summer to bury their clutches of eggs. These and other wonders make Dry Tortugas National Park truly a one-of-a-kind place.

An Undersea Wonderland

Underwater creatures whirl in a kaleidoscope of bright, gaudy colors. Here creatures like the queen conch, the aptly-named brain coral, and endangered sea turtle coexist, interconnected in their plight to survive.

Coral formations shelter dozens of colorful fish just a short swim from Dry Tortugas beaches. A walk along the fort's moat wall provides ample opportunity to see an assortment of marine creatures thriving in sea grass meadows. Sea grasses are vital to the neighboring corals as they block polluting sediments from reaching

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Stand in
the Sand!
Never Stand
on Coral or
Seagrass

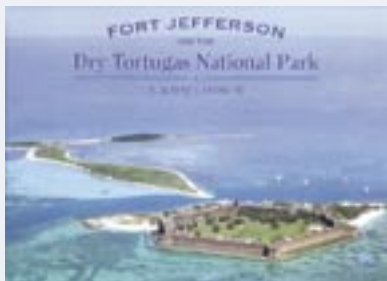


National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Park News Editor:
Mike Ryan

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The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



Fort Jefferson and the Dry Tortugas National Park
Available from the Bookstore
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Fort Jefferson—Guardian of the Gulf

Why build a fort in the middle of nowhere? Fort Jefferson was built to protect one of the most strategic deepwater anchorages in North America. By fortifying this spacious harbor, the United States maintained an important “advance post” for ships patrolling the Gulf of Mexico and the Straits of Florida. Nestled within the islands and shoals that make up the Dry Tortugas, the harbor offered ships the chance to re-supply, refit, or seek refuge from storms.

“A naval force designed to control the navigation of the Gulf could not desire a better position than...the Tortugas.”

Commodore John Rogers, 1829

The location of the Tortugas along one of the world’s busiest shipping lanes was its greatest military asset. Though passing ships could easily avoid the largest of Fort Jefferson’s guns, they could not avoid the warships that used its harbor.

In enemy hands, the Tortugas would have threatened the heavy ship traffic that passed between the Gulf Coast (including New Orleans, Mobile and Pensacola) and the

eastern seaboard of the United States. It could also serve as a potential staging area, or “springboard,” for enemy forces. From here they could launch an attack virtually anywhere along the Gulf Coast.

A powerful deterrent

Poised to protect this valuable harbor was one of the largest forts ever built. Nearly thirty years in the making (1846–1875), Fort Jefferson was never finished nor fully armed. Yet it was a vital link in a chain of coastal forts that stretched from Maine to California. Fort Jefferson, the most sophisticated of these, was a brilliant and undeniable symbol that the United States wanted to be left alone. Though never attacked, the fort fulfilled its intended role. It helped to protect the peace and prosperity of a young nation.

During the Civil War, Union warships used the harbor in their campaign to blockade Southern shipping. The fort was also used as a prison, mainly for Union deserters. Its most famous prisoner was Dr. Samuel Mudd, the physician who set the broken leg of John Wilkes Booth.

Abandoned by the Army in 1874, the fort was later used as a coaling station for warships. In 1898, the USS *Maine* sailed into history, departing the Tortugas on its fateful mission to Havana, Cuba. Though used briefly during both world wars, the fort’s final chapter as “Guardian of the Gulf” had long since closed.



NPS, Dry Tortugas National Park

Remote Location is Important Landmark *(continued from page 1)*

these living animals. This community is also a haven for conches, sea stars, clams, stingrays, and many kinds of young fish that find shelter and food among the long fleshy blades of grass.

A Bird’s Eye View

The seven tiny islands of Dry Tortugas are a vital layover for migrating birds traveling between South America and the U.S. and Canada. Here you may find a ruby-throated hummingbird, broad-winged hawk and white-eyed vireo all in one day! Nearly 300 species of birds have been spotted here. Spring is the optimal time to view birds, but any season offers the chance to see something unique. Even the untrained eye is easily impressed by the seven-foot wingspan of the magnificent frigatebird, often seen riding the thermals above the fort’s harbor light.

Visitors between the months of February and September will also have the opportunity to watch in awe as thousands of sooty terns soar above Bush Key. Their raucous calls warn outsiders to stay clear of guarded chicks.

Paradise Lost?

The view of this subtropical landscape can be deceptive. While its beauty is stunning, some of the park’s most treasured wonders are at risk. Fragile coral formations, displaying hundreds of years of growth, can be destroyed in seconds by a carelessly placed boat anchor or snorkel fin. Water pollution and sediments, from land or boats, muddy the clear waters that sustain the reefs. Non-native plants and animals interfere with natural processes. Gulls that once migrated seasonally are now sustained year-round at Garden Key, only to prey on sooty tern nests and chicks.

What you can do to help

We invite you to join us in the challenge to protect the great marine wilderness of the Dry Tortugas. Here’s what you can do to help your national park:

- Please abide by all park regulations. A copy can be obtained in the Visitor Center or Park Headquarters.
- If you snorkel, do not touch or stand on corals or seagrasses; marine creatures are fragile, and some are poisonous or can injure you.
- Stay out of closed areas.
- Remove all trash, and protect your food from wildlife.
- Be safe.

We hope that your adventure today is a memorable one. With your help these wonders will continue to amaze us all, just as they have for centuries.



U.S. Army MHI

1513

Spanish explorer Ponce de León discovers and names the Tortugas (Spanish for “turtle”)

1832

Naturalist John James Audubon observes bird and marine life in the Dry Tortugas

1846

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers begins construction of Fort Jefferson on Garden Key

1861

Start of the Civil War; Union soldiers stationed at Fort Jefferson for first time

Things To Do

Visitor Center

Information, exhibits, an orientation video, and educational sales items are available. The Visitor Center is open daily.

Touring Fort Jefferson

One of the great pleasures of any visit to the park is the chance to explore Fort Jefferson. Daily 45-minute guided tours are offered by the commercial ferry operators. You can also take a self-guiding walking tour by following the signs featuring a Civil War soldier.

Ranger-Conducted Activities

Check with park staff for times of ranger-guided programs.

Junior Ranger

A Dry Tortugas National Park Junior Ranger program is available. Recommended ages 8-13. Stop by the Bookstore for your free copy of the Junior Ranger Handbook.

Snorkeling

A designated snorkle area is located near the campground. Snorkeling along the outside of the moat wall or around the pilings of the south coaling dock is recommended.

Before snorkeling, make sure that all equipment fits properly. There are no life guards on duty, so swim at your own risk. No swimming or snorkeling is permitted inside the moat.

Make sure to never touch or stand on coral. Carelessness can destroy years of coral growth in seconds. Seagrass beds are a nursery for small fish and marine life. Please keep off. Stand in the sand. Never stand on coral or seagrass!

Fishing

Sport fishing is permitted. Lobstering and spear fishing are prohibited in the park. Florida state fishing laws and regulations also apply. Florida fishing license is required (available in Key West).

Boating

Private boaters can visit the park. Nautical charts are sold at the park's Visitor Center and in Key West. Information is obtainable from the Key West U.S. Coast Guard Station, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Charter Boat Association. Boaters should be aware of the possibility of extremely rough seas. Check with a ranger for rules on docking and mooring.

Bird Watching

The Dry Tortugas are renowned for spring bird migrations and tropical bird species. See a ranger to obtain a free Dry Tortugas Bird Checklist.



Jay Young

Walking the Moat Wall

The Moat Wall offers an easy hike (0.6 miles) around the fort. Walking the moat wall is a great opportunity to view coral, fish, and other marine life.

PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES:

- Entering the moat
- Climbing the moat wall
- Jumping from the moat wall
- Fishing from the moat wall

Walking Bush Key

Bush Key is closed for nesting February through mid-September. During the remainder of the year, Bush Key is normally open to the public. When walking the island, remain on the shoreline at all times. The island's interior is closed to protect its vegetation and bird nesting areas.

Things To Know

Getting Started

When you first arrive, place your towel and personal gear beneath a tree or near a picnic table. A limited number of picnic tables are available outside of Fort Jefferson. Please be considerate and share these tables with others. No food, drinks or trash are permitted inside Fort Jefferson. It is illegal to feed or harass wildlife.

Restrooms

Due to the remote nature of the park, public restrooms are not available. All park visitors are required to use the facilities on the commercial ferry boats. After 2:30 PM, composting toilets are available within the campground. These specially-designed toilets do not require water or chemicals, and can only accomodate a small number of users. They are extremely fragile. Throwing trash into toilets is prohibited.

Please help us protect the park. Do not remove seashells, coral, sand, brick, glass, stone, metal, or any other natural or historic objects.

Collecting Is Prohibited

Please help us protect the park. Do not remove seashells, coral, sand, brick, glass, stone, metal, or any other natural or historic objects. Never move or disturb artifacts. If you find an artifact, contact park staff.

Closed Areas

There are clearly-marked areas inside Fort Jefferson that are closed to the public. For your safety, please abide by all park regulations. The interior of the fort is open during daylight hours only. Due to sensitive birding nesting, Bush Key is closed from February through mid-September. Hospital Key and Long Key are closed year round. East Key and Loggerhead Key are open during daylight hours only.

On Garden Key, the following areas are closed to fishing:

- The moat, moat wall, and within 300 feet of moat wall
- Vessels moored at the Garden Key Dock
- The helicopter pad area
- The north and south beaches

Pets

Pets must be on a leash and under physical control at all times. Pets are not allowed inside Fort Jefferson. Pets must be curbed.

Do the rangers live at the fort?

Yes! There are about a dozen National Park Service personnel living and working in the Dry Tortugas. The group includes rangers, maintenance workers, and their families—enough to provide for the basic support and protection of the 100-square-mile park.

Employees have their own living quarters, complete with a kitchen, living room, and bathroom. Most live within the casemates of the fort. To help maintain their privacy, the housing area is closed to the public.

Rainwater provides employees with some of their fresh water. Using parts of the historic rainwater catchment system (first used in the 1850s), water is stored in a large cistern in the parade ground. A process known as reverse osmosis can also convert up to 1,000 gallons of saltwater into freshwater daily.

Electricity is provided by diesel generator. The generator runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week, creating enough electricity to power employee residences, offices and public areas.

Job vacancies are filled through competitive hiring. Employees can remain as long as they choose; the typical length of stay is three years.

Park staff normally work ten consecutive days. When not working, the staff may choose to stay at the fort during their days off to do the same things that you do on your days off: sleep late, clean house, write letters, do laundry. About once a month a trip to town becomes necessary for running errands, shopping or just to see the latest movie!



1865

Nearly 2,000 people (soldiers, prisoners and some civilians) at Fort Jefferson



1898

USS *Maine* anchors at Dry Tortugas before sailing to Cuba; Spanish-American War



1935

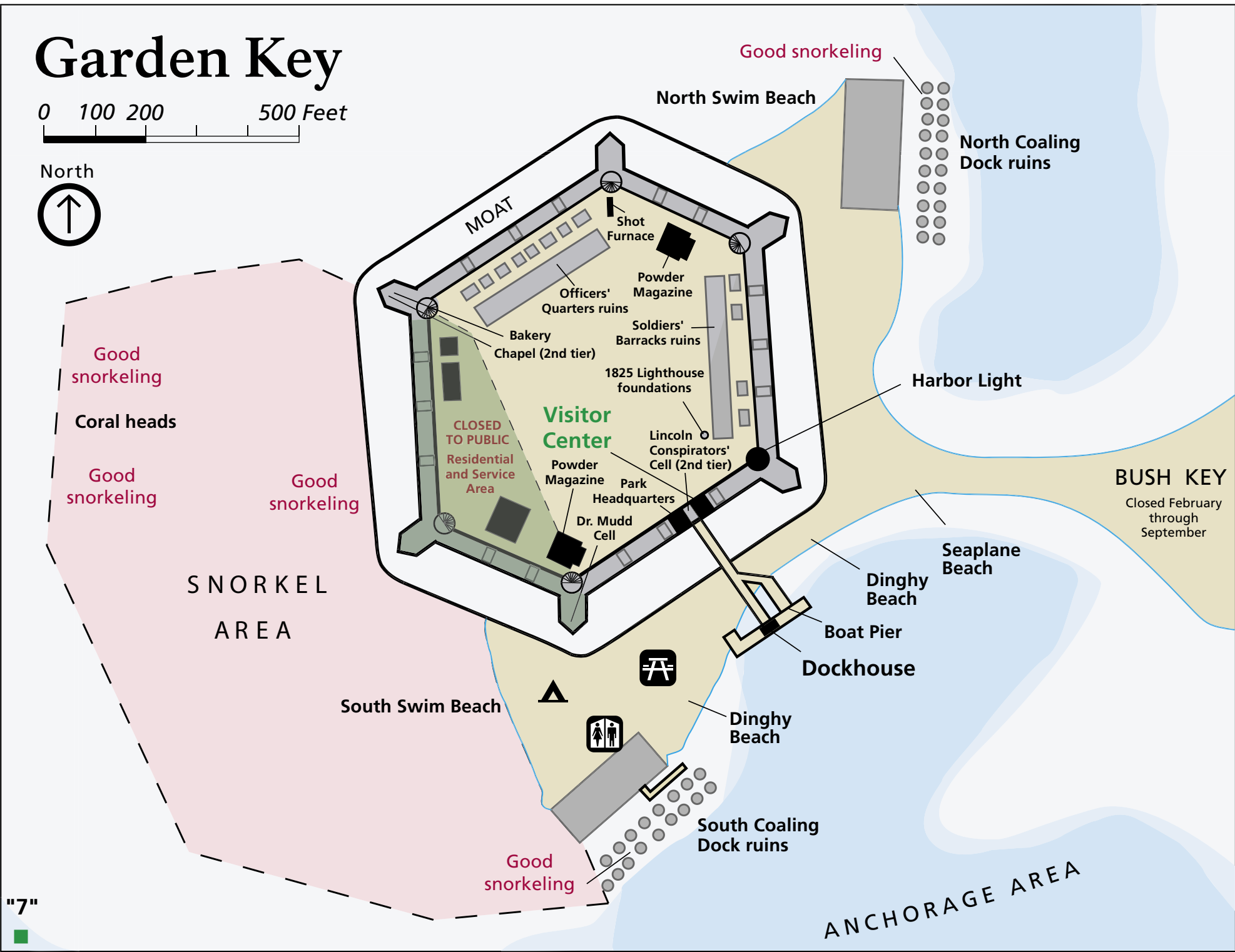
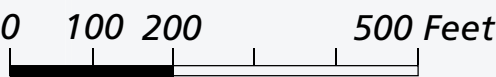
Fort Jefferson National Monument established



1992

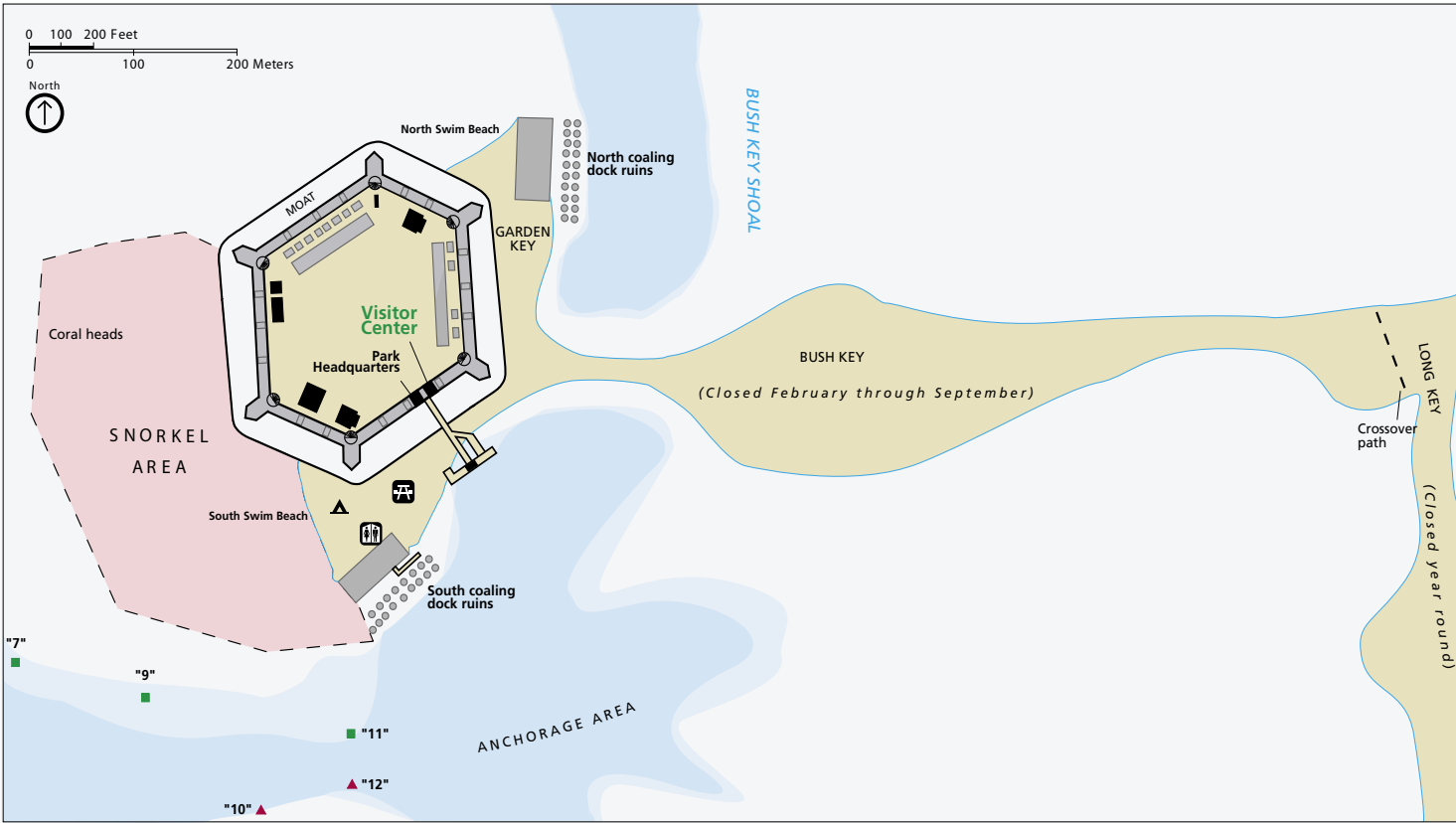
Rededicated as Dry Tortugas National Park; 64,700 total acres

Garden Key



Dive Flag
An approved dive flag must be displayed at all times when snorkeling *outside* of the designated Snorkel Area.

- Picnic area
- Primitive campground
- Campground toilets
- Visible ruin



Exploring Garden Key

Touring Fort Jefferson

A self-guiding trail begins near the Visitor Center. The easy to moderate trail (0.8 miles) includes all three levels of the fort and takes approximately 45 minutes to complete.

As you explore the fort, imagine life here during the hectic 1860s. At its height nearly 2,000 people lived within this remote *city on the sea*. Crowded onto the island were long walkways flanked by lush trees, impressive brick buildings, large wooden storehouses, and numerous tents. Soldiers marched and trained in the broiling sun. Laborers and prisoners hauled bricks and supplies to the masons who continued their never ending task of building the fort. Women and children, though fewer in number, were a welcome sight here. Surrounded by disease, death, and suffering, one wife described the fort as “a dark, mean place.”



The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers faced many challenges during the fort’s lengthy construction. Shifting sands, storms, and harsh conditions were common obstacles. The remote location hampered the shipment of supplies and skilled workers, especially during the Civil War. Meanwhile, sections of the fort started to sink. In an effort to limit the fort’s weight and slow subsidence, the second tier was intentionally left incomplete.

16 Million Bricks

Large quantities of brick, stone, cement, iron, and lumber were shipped here from around the United States. Most of the bricks were made in the Pensacola area, a four-day journey by sailing schooner. But when Florida left the Union in 1861, bricks could no longer be obtained from these brickyards. Instead they had to be shipped from as far away as Maine. These dark, red-colored Northern bricks are easily visible along the top of the fort’s walls.

Casemates

Casemates, or gunrooms, form the backbone of the fort. In essence, they *are* the fort. Large cannons mounted inside these rooms could fire through special openings known as embrasures. To construct these rooms, carpenters first built heavy wooden arches or frames. Next, skilled masons laid brick and mortar on top of the frames, creating the brick arches that are common throughout the fort.

420 Heavy Guns

To protect the Tortugas Anchorage, Fort Jefferson featured some of the largest and most advanced weapons of its age. The fort’s largest guns, known as 15-inch Rodman smoothbores, weighed 25 tons apiece. With a crew of seven men they could fire a 432-pound projectile a

Fort Jefferson’s second tier was never finished (note the large square openings). Deteriorating brickwork is being replaced as part of a major stabilization that began in 2004.

distance of three miles. But advances in technology eventually made even these guns obsolete. Most of the fort’s guns were purchased in 1900 and removed by a Philadelphia scrap dealer. Nevertheless, several original guns still remain on top of the fort’s walls, left there, no doubt, due to their enormous size. Their new owner was unable (or unwilling) to move them!

Soldiers Barracks

This once impressive building was designed to house ten companies of soldiers, or 1,000 men. More than a football field in length, the barracks were destroyed by a fire in 1912.

37 Powder Magazines

By design the fort’s gunpowder would be stored

in 37 different magazines—spread out to reduce the risk of a catastrophic explosion and to make the powder more accessible. Thick walls kept dangerous sparks and flames out, while narrow openings allowed fresh air to enter (to help keep their contents dry). Five of the fort’s magazines were designed to be “detached,” free-standing buildings.

16 Traverses

Imagine standing on top of the fort’s walls—exposed to enemy fire—during a battle. Feeling a little *vulnerable*? Thick masonry mounds, or traverses, were designed to help protect men and guns along this exposed part of the fort. Small powder magazines were located inside the traverses.



Rodman Cannons
A row of 10-inch Rodman smoothbore cannons mounted inside Fort Jefferson’s lower tier of casemates. These powerful muzzle-loading cannons weighed 7.5 tons apiece, and could fire a 128-pound projectile 2.5 miles. NPS, Dry Tortugas National Park



Soldiers Barracks
In this photo, taken about 1867, the Soldiers Barracks are under construction. The nearby lighthouse was begun in 1825, and replaced in 1876 by an iron lighthouse which still remains. NPS, Dry Tortugas National Park (DRT0 300889)

Snorkeling

Where is a good place to snorkel? A good place to start is along the outside of the moat wall. Large coral heads are located within the western edge of the designated Snorkel Area, approximately 75 yards from the moat wall. More experienced snorkelers may want to explore the metal pilings of the old coaling docks.

Patches of healthy coral reef, some easily accessible from shore and in shallow water, are snorkeling havens. Do not disturb coral or shells. All coral, living and dead, is protected from collection. Shipwrecks and all historic artifacts in the park are protected by law. Remember, you must display an approved dive flag when snorkeling outside of the designated Snorkel Area.

For your safety never snorkel alone—always use the “buddy system” when entering the water. Make sure to test and adjust your equipment before you begin snorkeling. If you must make an adjustment while snorkeling, carefully find a sandy bottom on which to stand. Stand in the sand! Never stand on coral or seagrass.



Sea Fan
This purple sea fan is a type of soft coral. These flexible colonies of animals capture food as they sway with the current. All coral (alive or dead) is protected by law. DO NOT REMOVE.

Brain Coral
Brain Corals are a type of hard coral. These reef-forming corals take decades to grow to full size. A Christmas Tree Worm has found a welcome home, encased in living coral.

The View From Above

"I felt for a moment as if the birds would raise me from the ground, so thick were they all round, and so quick the motion of their wings. Their cries were indeed deafening..."

John James Audubon, 1832

"Wherever we went there was a fresh eruption of black and white birds, billowing skyward and sweeping down upon us like a tornado.

I believe the sooty tern colony of Bush Key to be the number one ornithological spectacle of the continent."

Roger Tory Peterson, 1948

Such extraordinary comments have inspired birding enthusiasts from around the world to visit the Dry Tortugas. In fact, the bird life of the Tortugas has attracted the attention of visitors since Spanish explorer Ponce de León discovered these islands in June 1513.

To help protect these important species, the area was transferred to the Department of Agriculture in 1908, and maintained as a National Wildlife Refuge. In 1935, the Dry Tortugas were transferred to the National Park Service.

Several species—rarely seen elsewhere in the United States—choose to nest in the Dry Tortugas. The Sooty Tern and Magnificent Frigatebirds, for example, have selected the Tortugas as their only significant nesting area in the Continental United States. Many other bird species, however, are simply passing through. Migrating birds are a common sight in the spring and fall as they briefly pause to rest and nourish themselves before moving on. With so many birds crowded onto these tiny islands (299 different species have been identified in the Dry Tortugas), things can get pretty exciting! How many bird species can you identify during your visit? Listed below are some of the more commonly seen birds:



Sooty Tern

About 80,000 sooty terns nest annually on Bush Key (February through September), the only significant breeding colony in the Continental U.S. Most adult birds spend their off season in the Caribbean. Young birds migrate to the Atlantic Ocean off the west coast of Africa, remaining in flight for up to five years.



Magnificent Frigatebird

Long Key contains the only current nesting colony for the Magnificent Frigatebird in the Continental U.S. Their remarkable wingspan (6–8 feet) is the longest in proportion to weight (less than 3 pounds) of any bird. Their light weight allows them to soar effortlessly for hours like a hang glider. Frigatebirds often feed by harassing other birds in flight, forcing them to drop or disgorge their catch.



Brown Noddy

About 4,500 nest annually on Bush Key, which ranks as the only important breeding colony in the Continental U.S. They arrive with the Sooty Terns, but tend to stay longer, sometimes as late as October.

Masked Booby

Present year-round in small numbers (up to about 40). Hospital Key is their only important nesting area in the Continental U.S.



Ruddy Turnstone

Aptly named, these colorful shorebirds energetically patrol beaches, constantly using their bills to flip over rocks and debris in search of food. Remember, feeding or harassing wildlife in the park is prohibited by law.



Brown Pelican

A common sight year round in the Dry Tortugas, pelicans forage in shallow waters or near shore. These large birds weigh about eight pounds, yet can fly gracefully just inches above the water. They eat small fish, normally captured during spectacular plunge-dives.



Courageous African Americans Honored

Shortly after midnight on July 10, 1847, seven enslaved African Americans fled Garden Key. The courageous efforts of these men were recently honored by the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program. The Network to Freedom Program recognizes important efforts of enslaved African Americans to gain their freedom by escaping bondage. Because of this dramatic self-emancipation attempt, Fort Jefferson is now a proud member of the program.

Over the lengthy construction of Fort Jefferson, large numbers of enslaved workers were employed by the Army, often hired from owners in Key West. The conditions were harsh, and the hopes of escape virtually nonexistent. Freedom seekers faced incredible odds. Surrounded by miles of open sea and treacherous reefs, perhaps no area in North America presented greater challenges to self-emancipation.

Undaunted by these long odds, seven men set out to do the impossible. Under the cover of darkness they took possession of every vessel that could float, a brilliant move that would greatly reduce the risk of being pursued and captured. The enterprising group managed to remove three schooners from the harbor and a small boat belonging to the lighthouse keeper—a remarkable feat for only seven men to accomplish. Equally remarkable, their escape went completely unnoticed until daylight.

Soon after fleeing Garden Key, the men disabled three of the boats by smashing

holes in their hulls, and then continued westward in the schooner *Union*. By 7:00 AM the vessel was spotted from the Garden Key Lighthouse. The fleeing men had traveled 15 miles, and were now 12 miles west of Loggerhead Key traveling south. Because of their thoroughness prior to leaving Garden Key, only one old condemned vessel, the *Victor*, remained near the island.

Personnel on Garden Key immediately began refastening and caulking the *Victor*. Within two hours the vessel was repaired and outfitted. At 8:30 AM the repaired *Victor*, carrying eight men led by lighthouse keeper John Thompson, started in pursuit. Since there was no wind, oars were hastily fashioned and the men began an exhausting chase. Four hours later they had closed to within three miles of the *Union*. At 2:00 PM the freedom seekers cut away both masts of the *Union*, disabled its rudder, scrambled into a small boat, and began “pulling to the southward with great force.”

Thompson and his crew continued the pursuit for several more hours until they lost sight of the lighthouse. A rapidly developing storm forced the *Victor* to return to Garden Key by midnight. As the weather continued to deteriorate, Thompson wondering if the escapees would survive in their small boat.

The seven freedom seekers managed to survive the powerful storm, but their hazardous journey was only beginning. They traveled eastward along the Straits of Florida where they were spotted two days later near the island of Key Vaca, 120 miles east of the



Dry Tortugas. An alarm was spread and several vessels began chase. The following day the boat was discovered on the beach at Long Key several miles to the east. Coming ashore, the pursuers began firing their weapons in an effort to frighten the fleeing men. To avoid capture, the seven freedom seekers ran for the beach on the other side of the island, near Indian Key, and then desperately fled into the water. The chase finally came to an end as a boat from the sloop *Key West* picked the fleeing men from the water and brought them to Key West.

After an exhausting journey, the men had ultimately failed in their quest for freedom. Two leaders in the group were returned to their owners, and the remaining five men sent back to Fort Jefferson.

Enslaved African Americans endured countless hardships during the construction of Fort Jefferson. By 1863, the use of enslaved peoples was discontinued at this remote outpost. African Americans returned two years later, not in bondage, but as soldiers. No longer denied their freedom, by 1865 African Americans had become the guardians of freedom.



His Name Is Mudd?



Many assume that the famous expression “his name is mud” refers to Dr. Samuel Mudd, the doctor who set the broken leg of John Wilkes Booth. But the expression “his name is mud” was actually in use before Dr. Mudd was born. According to the Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English, the saying was in use as early as 1823 (42 years before the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln).

Dr. Samuel Alexander Mudd, known in history as one of the “Lincoln Conspirators,” was born in Charles County, Maryland, roughly 25 miles southeast of Washington, D.C. In 1865, a military court found Mudd guilty of conspiracy to assassinate the president, sentencing him to a life of imprisonment.

Mudd arrived at Fort Jefferson in July, 1865, along with three other Lincoln Conspirators. During his imprisonment Mudd played a key role in treating victims of a yellow fever epidemic. He was pardoned by President Andrew Johnson in 1869, and allowed to return to his family in Maryland.

Make sure to visit Dr. Mudd’s cell on the bottom level of Fort Jefferson, just past the Park Headquarters. Another area recently opened to the public is located just above the fort’s entrance. Climb the stairs of the lighthouse bastion to the second tier, then turn right. Dr. Mudd spent nearly three years in this dark, damp casemate. Watch out for holes in the floor. In a letter to his wife, Mudd explained the need for these unusual modifications, “We have a hole dug in the floor and little trenches cut. After every rain, our quarters leak terribly, and it’s not unusual to dip up from the floor ten and twelve large buckets of water daily.”

Dry Tortugas National Park



Established in 1935 as Fort Jefferson National Monument; rededicated as Dry Tortugas National Park in 1992. 64,700 acres

Information Inquiries:
40001 State Road 9336
Homestead, FL 33034-6733

(305) 242-7700

Website
www.nps.gov/drto

For information on boat and seaplane trips to Dry Tortugas, call the park or one of the companies listed below:

Sea Planes of Key West
(305) 294-0709
Sunny Days Catamarans
(305) 292-6100
Yankee Fleet
(305) 294-7009



Dry Tortugas National Park News is published as a service to park visitors by the Florida National Parks and Monuments Association (FNPMA)

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Turtles Make History in Tortugas

In 2004, sea turtles were once again active in the Dry Tortugas. The park possess one of the most isolated and least disturbed habitats for endangered and threatened sea turtles in the United States. In 2004, researchers documented 196 nests and 449 false crawls within the park. Loggerhead nests were the most common type (134 nests), followed by Green (59), and Leatherback (3). The leatherback nests were the first ever reported in the park. East Key was the most active island in the park (11), followed by Loggerhead (70), Bush (11), Hospital (3), and Garden Key (1).

By instinct, nesting occurs mainly at night to better avoid predators. False crawls occur when the female abandons a nesting attempt. False crawls are common, and may

occur if light or noise disturbs the turtle, if she encounters roots or debris while digging, or if she finds that the sand does not have the right consistency or moisture.

Sea turtles live in the open ocean, often traveling hundreds of miles from shore. Young turtles may spend their first dozen years drifting within clumps of sargassum weed while hiding from predators. Researchers using tags and DNA samples have located turtles in the Azores (eastern Atlantic Ocean) that were born in Florida.

Especially in the spring and summer months, at the height of the turtle nesting season, you might be lucky enough to spot one of these majestic animals in the waters of Dry Tortugas National Park!



Entrance Fees At Work

Visitors to Dry Tortugas National Park play a key role in helping to maintain this national treasure. If you travel to the park via a commercial ferry or seaplane, a \$5.00 entrance fee is automatically collected in Key West when you purchase your ticket. For other visitors to Garden Key, such as those arriving on their own boat, the entrance fee is collected in the park (a self-service fee station is located on the dock). The fee is valid for seven days.

Entrance fees are designed to recapture part of the park's operating costs. Important ways in which your money is spent include:

- Coral reef protection
- Replace picnic tables and grills
- Maintenance projects
- Update park exhibits
- Restore historic shot furnace

Other proposed projects include:

- Develop a new visitor center
- Open a historic powder magazine
- Develop a self-guiding audio tour

Leatherback Turtle

This image, taken in 2004, shows a leatherback turtle nesting on East Key in Dry Tortugas National Park. The leatherback is the largest and rarest turtle species in Florida waters. The three leatherback nests recorded on East Key in 2004 were the first in the history of the park and the first in Monroe County, Florida since 1979. NPS photo, Eloise Pratt.

Florida National Parks and Monuments Association

Florida National Parks and Monuments Association (FNPMA) is a National Park Service Cooperating Association dedicated to increasing public understanding of the natural and historic values of south Florida's national parks. A wide variety of educational books, videos, and related park theme items may be purchased at park visitor center bookstores or by mail. Proceeds from sales support educational programs in south Florida national parks.

BOOKS

Fort Jefferson and the Dry Tortugas National Park by Wayne Landrum...A concise yet comprehensive celebration of the park's history and natural beauty. 72 pp., hard. \$19.95

Snorkeling Guide to Marine Life by Paul Humann and Ned DeLoach...Comprehensive photo ID featuring 260 species from Florida, Caribbean, and Bahamas. 80 pp., paper. \$14.95

Pages from the Past: A Pictorial History of Fort Jefferson by Albert Manucy...The history of Fort Jefferson comes alive in this comprehensive portfolio of historic photos, color illustrations, and fascinating text. 32 pp. paper. \$7.95

Seacoast Fortifications of the United States by E.R. Lewis...A fine book explaining and illustrating the development of American seacoast defenses. 145 pp., paper. \$21.95

Everglades National Park & the Nearby Florida Keys by H. Zim...Comprehensive guide to identify commonly seen plant & animal life. Paper, handy pocket size. \$4.99

Artillery Through the Ages: a Short, Illustrated History of Cannon by Albert Manucy...Emphasizes types of cannons used in America. 92 pp., paper. \$2.75

Florida's Birds: A Handbook and Reference by Herbert Kale, II, and David Maehr...A comprehensive handbook and identification guide to 325 Florida bird species. Includes habitat, seasons present and breeding, and distinguishing marks. 288 pp., 54 color plates, paper. \$19.95

Audubon Field Guide to Florida by Alden, Cech, and Nelson...A compact, yet comprehensive guide to Florida's natural world. Complete field guide information on birds, insects, reptiles, marine life, plants, geology, weather, even sky

maps and a section on the state's best natural parks and preserves. \$19.95

Blood on the Moon: the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln by Edward Steers, Jr....Includes latest reseach on John Wilkes Booth and Dr. Samuel Mudd. 360 pp. hard. \$29.95

VIDEOS

Fort Jefferson—Gibraltar of the Gulf. 11 min., VHS. \$11.95

DVD

Everglades and the National Parks of South Florida includes Biscayne, Big Cypress and Dry Tortugas. 90 min., stereo. \$24.95

SPECIALITY ITEMS

A wide range of Dry Tortugas National Park items are available for sale. Items include pins, T-shirts, patches, magnets, mouse pads, tote bags, postcards, slides, and posters.